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GREG FURMINGER/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Two-wheeling toward a cure

Debra Harrison of Fonthill is among number of Niagara cyclists taking part in the 200-kilometre Enbridge Ride to Conquer Cancer.

See the full story on Page 2

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LOCALNEWS

■ FUNDRAISERS

Cyclists take up 200-km challenge from Toronto to Niagara Falls

GREG FURMINGER
Postmedia Network

Debra Harrison's biggest worry is taking a spill out of the starting gate and being crashed into by hundreds of other cyclists.

Other than that, the 57-year-old Fonthill woman foresees no other problems in the 200 kilometres of pavement ahead.

Harrison is participating in the Enbridge Ride to Conquer Cancer that takes place the weekend of June 13 to 14. She will make her way from Humber College in west Toronto to Mohawk College in Hamilton on the Saturday, and the next day complete her journey to the hydro gates above the Horseshoe Falls in Niagara.

Harrison has always been an active mom, but admits in recent years her career and other commitments sidelined her fitness routine. Three years ago, she began taking up spinning at Studio Twenty at the town's shopping centre.

It was there in January that owner Krysta Pratt suggested they take part in the big cycling adventure.

"I said, 'Two hundred kilometres, are you serious? I haven't rode more than 50.'"

After some thought, she accepted the offer.

"I'm competitive, so I said, 'OK, I'll take the challenge.'

"I'll do anything I can to support cancer (research). We've all had friends or family who have died of cancer."

According to the Canadian Cancer Society, two of every five Canadians will get cancer.

When Harrison clips into her pedals to start her ride, she'll be remembering a friend who shared the same birthing date as her, Kelly McFarland, who died several years ago as a young mom.

"That was my first realization that cancer can hit anyone, that it's not an old person disease," Harrison says.

Now that Harrison's daughter Emily is all grown and graduated from college, she was encouraged by her child to do more to keep fit and stick around for her.

Harrison's recent decision to work toward a better body and, more specifically, her efforts to train for the big ride, have since inspired co-workers to also improve their health and fitness, something she hadn't expected would happen when she signed up for the cancer fundraiser.

Recently, she has started to log 100-km days under the sunny skies, in addition to the milage put on using a stationary bike.

"You don't just go out and do this. I don't want to have a heart attack," she quips.

"It's not just about having strong legs."

She's also been working regularly to also develop core muscles that must be in fine form for her long two-wheeled adventure.

Since late April, Harrison has logged more than 700 kilometres on pavement — that's in addition to her spinning.

On the streets, she's been joined by Pratt, who's also taking up the Ride to Conquer Cancer, and five others who have been training at the studio — two others from Pelham and three from Port Colborne, including a mother-daughter pair.

"I'm excited to just complete the challenge," said 41-year-old Pratt, who was approached by ride organizers when they were searching for host training sites for ride participants.

"I've done rides in the past, but this will be my biggest one," Pratt said, noting her two-time involvement in The Big Move, which in early fall raises funds for Niagara's Walker Family Cancer Centre.

The Team Studio Twenty group has since aligned itself with Salit Steel, which has 300 people riding the event's same Classic route, specifically with one of its riders, Steve Cohen, of Steve's Cyclepaths. In the past seven years, the group has raised more than $4.3 million, and has got a lock on logistics for participating cyclists, including busing to Toronto, and bike transport.

Since 2008, The Enbridge Ride to Conquer Cancer has raised more than $119 million for the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre and currently is Canada's largest cycling fundraiser.

Each participant is required to raise a minimum $2,500.

Harrison has so far raised more than $2,600. She hopes to increase that number. People can donate to her effort at www.conquercancer.ca/goto/debraharrison2015.

This week she was to put in more training before taking it easier in the days leading up to the big ride.

All worries aside about a snafu at the start, Harrison is anxious to hit the open road.

"I'm pretty excited," she says. "I'm pretty pumped up."

greg.furminger@sunmedia.ca
Twitter: @GregAtTheTrib

GREG FURMINGER/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Debra Harrison of Fonthill is among a number of Niagara cyclists taking part in the 200-kilometre Enbridge Ride to Conquer Cancer.

TEAM STUDIO TWENTY

Debra Harrison, Kysta Pratt, Todd Fleming, and Mike Ackroyd all of Pelham; and Bob Sutherland and Sharon Cochrane and her daughter Ashley all of Port Colborne.

To donate visit www.conquercancer.ca/goto/debraharrison2015

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LOCALNEWS

■ **HAYDEN DAVIS:** Family, community rallies for little girl in serious cancer fight

Heaven can wait for little Hayden

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

It's a word no parent wants to hear.

Not when their child is 50. Certainly not when they're five.

Six simple letters. Cancer.

It's a word Trimmer Benner never imagined having to associate with the bright-eyed senior kindergartener who lovingly calls him Dad.

But that's the reality for the family of Hayden Davis.

A little more than a month ago, they received a heartbreaking diagnosis.

It was near the end of February when signs of the disease creeping in first began to appear.

Only five years old, Hayden was experiencing back pain that caused her sometimes to cry to her mom and dad.

Trimmer and Hayden's mother, Jessica Davis, first blamed it on her dance and skating lessons, as well as the clumsy streak the energetic youngster is known for.

"She's a five-year-old. She's very active, and sometimes she falls down," Trimmer says, thinking back to what he thought was simply the bumps and bruises of childhood.

Though they first thought little of the issue, when it became a daily complaint their concern quickly grew.

A trip to the doctor's office prompted blood work, X-rays and an ultrasound, each yielding no definitive results.

sed, it started to intensify," Trimmer says of his daughter's pain, which resulted in several hospital and urgent-care visits.

In early April and with still no cause identified, Hayden fell ill with a fever while in class at Ecole St. Joseph and was brought back to her Port Colborne home.

When the fever refused to break, her parents took her to the hospital, where an MRI was conducted.

"They found spots on her spine," Trimmer says, with a solemn voice.

At first, they were told it might be an infection. More tests were needed.

"Then they discovered a mass, as they called it. A tumour," he says.

After what seemed like endless tests to identify what they were dealing with, Hayden's family got the gut-wrenching diagnosis — Stage 4 neuroblastoma.

"It hit pretty hard," Trimmer says, vividly recalling the moment doctors shared the news.

Despite trying to prepare themselves, knowing early on in the hospital stay that cancer was likely, the news landed on the couple like a ton of bricks.

"I just don't have words to describe the emotion, other than numb," he says.

The next few days consisted of little more than tears.

The family — including siblings Charlee, 2, and TJ, 14 — was able to regain composure, wanting to show strength to help guide Hayden through the difficult journey.

"We've explained to her she's sick, that there's a lump in her back making her very sick," Trimmer says.

"I can't say she understands the gravity of the situation."

The father found it heartbreaking explaining to his five-year-old that the medicine she needs to feel better is first going to make her feel worse.

On April 25, the youngster began her first round of aggressive chemotherapy, followed by a brief visit home a few weeks later.

Hayden recently completed her second round of treatment and was able to return home to Port Colborne for a few days before a fever sent ber back to McMaster Children's Hospital.

Those few moments of normalcy have done much to boost her spirits, Trimmer says.

"Some days she's down," he admits.

"She's upset she's losing her hair. She misses school and (recently) missed a dance recital."

It was a breath of fresh air seeing her back at home, he says warmly.

"She was outside playing in the nice weather. Just full of smiles."

Doctors have a lengthy plan in place that will have Hayden undergo up to seven rounds of chemotherapy before they can attempt to remove the tumour.

Before embarking on her third round June 6, Hayden will travel to Toronto SickKids to have her bone marrow harvested. It will be preserved and transferred back into her body once her chemotherapy is completed.

SUPPLIED PHOTO

Several fundraisers have been planned in support of Hayden Davis, a five-year-old Port Colborne girl who is battling Stage 4 neuroblastoma. Hayden is pictured in a recent photo with dad Trimmer Benner.

To help brighten her days through what has been a dark time, members of her family have offered to shave their heads to mimic the young beauty's new look.

It's an offer she quickly accepted, but not without issuing an extra challenge to Dad.

"She wanted me to dye my beard pink," he says with a laugh.

"Anything to see that smile."

Hayden's family is not alone in offering support to the youngster.

The community has rallied around the Benner and Davis clan in what Trimmer calls a "remarkable" way.

Several fundraisers have been planned, and a GoFundMe account, Hayden's Hugs — Heaven Can Wait, has raised more than $32,000 to assist the family with costs associated with her treatment and the required time off work that allows Jessica and Trimmer to stay at Hayden's side in hospital.

"We spent the first week crying every day because of the diagnosis. The following week, we were crying so much because we were overwhelmed by the support," Trimmer says.

"When I saw Hayden's Hugs, I fell apart. There are a lot of good people out there."

The GoFundMe page was created by Sam Wilson, a friend of Hayden's aunt and UFC fighter Alexis Davis.

Trimmer offered thanks on behalf of his family to everyone who has offered assistance in any way, including those who sent positive thoughts and prayers Hayden's way.

"The more people who send positive energy her way, the better she'll be."

■ To make a donation, visit www.gofundme.com/Haydenshugs.

FUNDRAISER FOR HAYDEN DAVIS

Hayden's Hugs family fun fair

What: A day filled with children's activities, inflatables, face painting, Disney characters, food, a penny sale, bake sale, craft vendors and live music. Admission is free, but tickets in exchange for donations will be required for activities.

When: Saturday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Where: Community Living Port Colborne-Wainfleet, 105 Grassie Ave.

Why: All proceeds to support the family of Hayden Davis, a five-year-old Port Colborne girl recently diagnosed with Stage 4 neuroblastoma.

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e-mail: welland.tribune@sunmedia.ca
John Tobon, ADVERTISING DIRECTOR
Peter Conradi, MANAGING EDITOR
POSTMEDIA

COMMENT

Improving Thursday evenings at Peace Park

DAVE AUGUSTYN
For PelhamNews

Over the last six weeks, town council approved requests from Pelham Farmers' Market, Pelham Supper Market, the Fonthill bandshell comittee and the broader community to help improve the Thursday evening experience in Peace Park in Pelham.

And, based on some significant (and largely negative) feedback, council reversed one of its earlier decisions.

First, council approved expanding the number of supper market vendors and to include even more flavours and varieties. Some venders will also offer cooking demonstrations by local chefs using fresh produce from the nearby farmers' market.

Second, council approved the request from Pelham Farmer's Market to allow Vintners Quality Alliance wine samples and sales in the market, as permissible through a provincial pilot program. Any wine purchased is intended for personal use at home. I took advantage of this opportunity last Thursday and bought wine from Calamus Winery. (Vineland Estates also sells its wines at the Fenwick farmers' market Wednesday nights at St. Ann's Church.)

Third, because of significant feedback from the Fonthill bandshell committee and the broader community, all of Peace Park will not be licensed for alcohol; only a portion of the park — the northern part containing the supper market — will be fenced and licensed.

In mid-April, upon recommendation from town staff, council initially approved licensing all of Peace Park for the consumption of craft beer and local wine. The special occasion permit would have required placing a discreet 36-inch fence around the park's perimeter each week, except for six access points. Licensing the entire area was to be a trial and staff were to report monthly to council.

But, after meeting directly with volunteers organizing the bandshell entertainment, the farmers' market and the supper market, and listening to the significant public opposition to the change, council reversed this decision in early-May.

In late-May, staff recommended that the bandshell committee hire police to patrol Peace Park to ensure folks weren't drinking alcohol in the non-licensed areas while enjoying the concerts. Instead, council directed staff to hire security personnel to monitor the non-licensed area at the town's expense.

Finally, council approved a joint promotions committee to help circulate a weekly newsletter about the features of the farmers' and supper markets, the bandshell schedule, shuttle bus and parking information, and to review operations.

After considering the recommendations of staff and the feedback from residents and some of the town's most dedicated volunteers, council approved these improvements so that your Thursday evenings in Peace Park might continue to offer a

SUPPLIED PHOTO

American Fortitude is pictured below Welland Canal Lock 1 on May 13 in this photo by Skip Gillham.

Shipwrecks – American Fortitude

SKIP GILLHAM
For Postmedia Network

The retired bulk carrier *American Fortitude* was towed up the Welland Canal on May 13 and 14 for Port Colborne.

It was moored at the International Marine Salvage yard south of Lock 8 and it appears to be a candidate for scrapping.

The vessel was once one of the finest on the Great Lakes. It was built for National Steel in 1953 and sailed as *Ernest T. Weir* until 1978. The vessel had a significant collision with the tanker *Mercury* in Lake St. Clair on May 5, 1964, that resulted in the latter ship going aground.

Both vessels had considerable damage but were repaired.

Ernest T. Weir joined Columbia Transportation early in 1978. It was renamed *Courtney Burton* later that year and converted to a self-unloader at Sturgeon Bay, Wisc., from 1980-81. The 210.31-metre-long steamship was sold to the American Steamship Co. in 2006 and operated through 2008 as *American Fortitude* before tying up at Toledo.

Following a sale to shipbreakers in Texas, *American Fortitude* was towed down the Welland Canal in Nov. 29, 2014, only to lack Transport Canada clearance for the late season tow east of Montreal. As a result, the ship was brought back to Oswego, N.Y., and spent the winter there until the recent trip back to Port Colborne.

LIONS THANKFUL FOR CARNIVAL SUPPORT

The Fabulous Fenwick Lions thank the community for all the support during our annual carnival.

To the hundreds of people who turned out for the parade on Friday, Tom Bishop's Wild West Show and the park full of people that watched the fireworks on Saturday, thank you.

To the patrons who supported the Lioness penny sale, the crowds that enjoyed the midway and the food booth, we appreciate your attendance.

A special thanks goes out to those participants, both human and canine, that supported the Purina Walk for Dog Guides on Sunday. The walk was a great success and raised over $5,000 for the initiative.

Thanks as well to the town staff from parks and rec who worked to get the park ready for our celebration.

To the Fonthill and District Kinsmen Club our thanks for handling the parking.

To Tom Bishop and all his performers, thanks for a wonderful show – you certainly packed them in.

The Saturday night fireworks display by RedBoss Pyrotechnicians was absolutely spectacular. Thanks to Mike and his crew for a great show.

And where would we be without Crown Amusements to provide the mainstay of our carnival – the midway. Thank you Maggie and Dirk for another successful year.

The carnival draw winners were: bicycle – Rick Dobrucki from Wellandport; Stihl Leaf Blower – Rick Goldfinch of Thorold. The blanket was won by Richard Morrow of Fenwick. Thanks go out to the draw donors, Pic's Motor Clinic and Eleanor Cumming.

JEFF PICKUP
PRESIDENT, FABULOUS FENWICK LIONS

MEDICINE: Sarah Chaudhry plans to open Niagara practice after Welland residency

Future doctor sets sights on Welland

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

The doctor is in — well, almost.

Fonthill native Sarah Chaudhry took the next step in earning the title when she graduated from the Niagara campus of McMaster University's Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine.

Having walked proudly across the convocation stage, she's set to begin her residency with Welland McMaster Family Health Team — a move she expects to follow with the launch of her own family practice in Niagara.

"I am absolutely thrilled to be doing my residency in Welland and feel extremely fortunate to have been given this opportunity," the 26-year-old said.

"Niagara and Welland are home to me and being able to serve this community during my training is an honour."

The daughter of local obstetrician Dr. Naheed Chaudhry was inspired by her mother's work.

"I grew up seeing how much my mom loves practising medicine, how rewarding her career as a physician is, and how much you can really affect your community at a grassroots level," said Chaudhry, who earned her undergraduate degree in biology from Niagara University in Lewiston, N.Y.

She intends to start a practice alongside her fiance, who is just finishing his training in family medicine.

"Ideally we'd like to work with other family physicians and allied health professionals in a group setting, like a family health team or family health organization," Chaudhry said.

"This way we'd be able to provide comprehensive care to our patients in a team setting."

Chaudhry is drawn to the "idea of taking care of people throughout the course of their lives and helping them to navigate the health-care system."

"On top that, in family medicine you get to prevent people from getting sick through regular health promotion in your practice, which is something that I'm passionate about."

As part of her medical training, Chaudhry completed a palliative care elective with the South Niagara Palliative Shared Care Team.

"Every patient visit was in the home, and it was really a privilege to be able to help those people who were in the end stages of their lives," she said.

"Doing home visits really helps the clinician understand so much more about their patients and how to support them. That's something that I'd like to do in the future."

Chaudhry received the Greater Niagara Medical Staff Association Scholarship in recognition of her commitment to furthering her medical career in Niagara. She plans to use the $1,000 scholarship money to build her own portable medical kit to assess patients during palliative care home visits.

maryanne.firth@sunmedia.ca
Twitter: @mfirthTribune

SUPPLIED PHOTO

Following her graduation from the Niagara campus of McMaster University's Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine, Sarah Chaudhry will begin her residency with Welland McMaster Family Health Team.

■ AVIATION

Bill introduced to rename airport for Rungeling

ALLAN BENNER
Postmedia Network

A local effort to honour an "amazing woman" and aviation pioneer is one step from becoming reality.

Last week, Niagara West-Glabrook MPP Tim Hudak introduced a private bill in the provincial legislature to officially rename Niagara Central Airport after 104-year-old Pelham resident Dorothy Rungeling, Canada's first woman to fly in international air races, one of the first women to hold a commercial air licence, the first woman to hold an airline transport licence, and the first woman to fly a helicopter solo.

"Dorothy Rungeling is an amazing woman with an interesting life who has made significant contributions to aviation, her community and the local airport," Hudak said in a media release.

Hudak said Rungeling is also credited with saving the airport that may soon bear her name, by drawing attention and support for the facility in the 1950s.

He said Rungeling's achievements and her "trail-blazing spirit" need to be recognized.

The airport's owners — the municipalities of Welland, Pelham, Port Colborne and Wainfleet — have all approved the name change, but airport commission chair Richard Rybiak said the final say rests with the province.

"Everybody is on side," Rybiak said.

He said the decision is now in the hands of the provincial government.

"I'm hoping that the House understands that time is an issue, and that we are able to celebrate the renaming sometime this summer," he added. "Once it goes to third reading, it will have been effectively renamed."

Welland MPP Cindy Forster said she also strongly supports Hudak's efforts.

"It's an honour to have been part of the Niagara Central Airport's renaming to honour and recognize a trailblazer — a remarkable, barrier-breaking woman, Dorothy Rungeling, who went against the grain, defied social norms and became not only a pilot, but a leader in the aviation industry at a time when very few women did," Forster said.

allan.benner@sunmedia.ca

> **"I'm hoping that the House understands that time is an issue, and that we are able to celebrate the renaming sometime this summer."**
>
> Richard Rybiak, airport commission chair

SUPPLIED PHOTO

Dorothy Rungeling, 104, stands with MPP Tim Hudak who introduced a private members bill this week to rename the Niagara Central Airport in honour of the Canadian aviation pioneer.

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Cyclists welcome at local businesses

FRANKI IKEMAN
Postmedia Network

Business groups across the region have signed on to participate in the inaugural year of the Bike Friendly Business Networks.

Bike Friendly Business networks have come together in Welland, Pelham, Grimsby and Thorold. The initiative is a partnership between Healthy Living Niagara and the business associations from the communities.

Lisa Gallant, co-ordinator for Healthy Living Niagara, said the project is aimed at encouraging people to leave their cars behind for small, in-town errands. Gallant said studies have shown that active transportation has positive effects on the economy for downtown businesses. The motto — bike local, shop local — reflects that idea.

Natalie Stickles, marketing co-ordinator for Pelham Business Association, said it made sense for the community to open up to cyclists, given its location in relation to local bike trails.

Her husband, Gary Stickles, owns a restaurant that is part of the network, Mokus Restaurant of Fonthill. He said that it makes sense for his business to give this a try.

"Well, biking is kind of an up-and-coming part of the tourist sector. A lot of people are coming down from Toronto, Hamilton and they do the bike tours around through the Niagara region and we've hooked up with that," said Stickles.

His business, as with others in the networks, will have little green signs in their window that read "Bike Friendly." They all must meet certain criteria in order to be in the network, such as providing water for cyclists, bike repair kits, tour maps and bike racks.

FRANKI IKEMAN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Gary Stickles, owner of Mokus Restaurant of Fonthill is pictured inside his business, with his Bike Friendly sign in Pelham.

Stickles also said they will have healthy food choices available to cater towards the healthy lifestyles of cyclists.

Other businesses are also offering different incentives to encourage cyclists to come in, such as discounted rates and home delivery if you can't carry your purchase on your bike.

For more information on Bike Friendly businesses, and for a full list of participating businesses, visit www.healthylivingniagara.com.

franki.ikeman@sunmedia.ca
Twitter: @FrankiIkeman

CROHN'S DISEASE: Welland girl on a mission to cure gastrointestinal illness

A 'local hero' for Crohn's at 10

GREG FURMINGER
Postmedia Network

Emma Haist loves strawberries, raspberries, cucumbers and pasta sauce. But they don't like her.

So that means with strawberry shortcake season just ahead, the Welland girl who turns 11 soon will have to sit it out — and for the rest of her life, unless she can help change that for herself and tens of thousands of other Canadians.

It was upon hospitalization on her 10th birthday, and after showing symptoms for eight months before that, that the fifth-grader at Fitch Street School came to be diagnosed with Crohn's disease.

"It means a whole change in diet," says mom Marlene.

No foods with seeds. No nuts, no corn, nothing with a skin and that includes every kid's favourite, hotdogs.

"Your digestive system doesn't break that down," Marlene says.

But while Crohn's may have taken a big bite out of the bespectacled blonde's former eating habits, the youngster is biting back.

Emma has made it her mission to spread awareness of the disease and raise money for research.

"I just want to find a cure," she says, as schoolmates and teachers rally behind her for the upcoming Gutsy Walk for Crohn's and Colitis Canada.

The Niagara fundraiser takes place June 7 at the Lock 3 complex in St. Catharines.

Emma designed and since February has been selling $15 walk T-shirts to raise money, so far collecting more than $2,270. With white printing on cotton fabric of the national foundation's colour, they say: "I wear purple for Emma."

But that's not all she's done.

Last fall, she addressed the Lioness Club in Fenwick about the disease that will require her to travel every eight weeks to McMaster medical centre in Hamilton to receive medicine for her illness intravenously.

Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, both bowel diseases, inflame the lining of the gastrointestinal tract and disrupt the body's ability to digest food, absorb nutrition and eliminate waste in a healthy manner. Emma's Crohn's is characterized by ulcers where the small and large intestines meet.

GREG FURMINGER/POSTMEDIA NETWORK
Emma Haist with her supporters at Fitch Street School.

The girl has also been holding fundraising barbecues in hopes of finding a cure.

All her efforts aren't going unnoticed.

"A young person living with Crohn's who is already out public speaking on the subject really caught my attention," says Maria Glidden, Crohn's and Colitis Canada's development co-ordinator for Ontario's southwestern chapters.

For that, she has decided to award Emma with a special role for Niagara's Gutsy Walk in 2016.

"When I started hearing about Emma, I thought she's got to be honourary chair next year," Glidden says.

"She's really got a great attitude and positive energy" that will help her carry on through life with Crohn's, she adds.

"She just kind of decided to own it."

Emma fits into Crohn's and Colitis Canada's goal of making it better known that the diseases that typically appear in a person's late teen years or early 20s is more and more affecting children. Its rate in kids under age 10 has doubled over the past decade.

Glidden's own daughter was diagnosed at age nine with ulcerative colitis.

At the Haist family dinner table, meals with dad Roger and sisters Sarah, 9, and Hayley, 13, have required some adjustments to meet Emma's dietary needs.

"We always have to consider what we're cooking," her mom Marlene says.

For a person living with Crohn's or colitis, the wrong foods could trigger abdominal pain, cramping, gas, bloating, fatigue, diarrhea and loss of appetite.

Canada has among the highest rates of Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis in the world, with nearly 233,000 adults and children living with these debilitating diseases; 129,000 with Crohn's and 140,000 with colitis, the foundation's website says.

Crohn's and colitis now impact 2.5 times the number of Canadians as multiple sclerosis.

Crohn's disease is a lifelong illness without a cure whereas colitis can be eliminated through surgery.

Emma hopes to help the fight against Crohn's in any way she can, by raising research funds from the front of a grocery store or by getting more people to take notice by speaking in front of crowds.

Says Glidden: "She's a local hero for doing it."

greg.furminger@sunmedia.ca
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LOCALNEWS

ETSY: Donations collected to support Pelham Cares

Market a mecca for unique buys

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

It's prime hunting ground for unique finds.

All things one-of-a-kind and handmade will line the many tables at the Heirlooms Artisan Market Saturday, June 20.

About 50 online Etsy store owners will display their products at the third annual market, being held 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at Vermeer's Garden Centre and Flower Shop, 684 South Pelham Rd. in Welland.

Rather than charge admission to the market, shoppers are asked to bring a non-perishable food donation for Pelham Cares.

"We're also encouraging people to bring a toonie for Pelham Cares as well," said Vermeer's buying manager Jackie Cornwall.

She encouraged people to forgo their morning coffee purchase, instead donating the change to the charity.

"This time of year, our shelves are getting fairly empty," Pelham Cares board president Tracy Holmwood said.

As supplies dwindle, it forces the organization to use its limited resources to purchase necessities to stock the food bank.

"Without the help of the community and this type of event, it's hard for us to make ends meet," Holmwood said, while offering her appreciation for the support.

The organization, she added, needs canned meats, canned fruits and vegetables, laundry detergent and hygiene products, such as deodorant and shampoo.

The first 100 people to make a donation at the market will receive a bag filled with items donated by vendors.

"We're a community-minded event," co-ordinator Erin Snow said.

MARYANNE FIRTH/ POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Heirlooms Artisan Market co-ordinator Erin Snow is pictured with items from only a handful of the 50 vendors participating in the June 20 event.

The market, which drew more than 1,500 people last year, not only supports Pelham Cares, but also shows support for local entrepreneurs running "handmade businesses," she added.

Having a platform to showcase products to customers face-to-face is a real benefit, said Valerie Brown, of Firepan Jewellery Designs.

"People like to pick things up and look at them," said the Fonthill resident.

"Online you can get a general idea, but in person you can hold it, put it on. It's a more personal experience."

There will be a wide array of vendors, Snow said, featuring items such as jewelry, handmade books, home decor, artwork, children's clothing and bath and body products, among others.

"Variety, that's what we aim for."

She called the market the ideal place to "get something made with love, care and time."

"You'll get a keepsake, an heirloom."

There are still limited spaces available for vendors. To apply or for more information, visit www.heirloomsartisanmarket.blogspot.ca.

maryanne.firth@sunmedia.ca
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■ POLICE BOARD

Taxi industry could get new rule book

BILL SAWCHUK
Postmedia Network

Niagara's police services board is considering rewriting the rules for taxis in Niagara.

"There have been enough complaints from municipalities and operators, that I think we need to look at it as soon as possible," said Andy Petrowski, chair of the board's administration committee, which oversees licensing for taxis and tow-trucks.

"The bottom line is I think there is room for significant improvement. Everything is up for review, and we have to have an open mind listening to the operators and drivers.

"And the public is more than welcome to attend and bring their concerns or suggestions as well."

There will be a consultation session June 29 at police headquarters, 110 James St. in St. Catharines. The committee will take verbal or written submissions.

"We do annual public meetings in the fall, but this is a public consultation session being held in advance," said Deb Morton, executive director of the Police Services Board.

"The board wanted the opportunity to go to the vehicle-for-hire industry and ask them for comments and input before there are any bylaw amendments. When we get to the fall public meeting, there will be some draft proposals based on the feedback."

Hanif Patni, president and CEO of Coventry Connections, which owns Central Taxi, said change is nothing unusual in the industry. Coventry is one of the largest operators of taxis in Canada.

"Regional councils and licensing boards look at these things from time to time," he said. "Ultimately, what is important is the consumer and are they getting adequate protection? Is it safe and reliable? Is it enforced properly?"

The licensing committee wants input in a number of areas, including solutions to problems getting taxis during peak periods, Petrowski said.

One solution is Uber, a ride-sharing service. Uber customers use a mobile app to request a ride, set a pick-up and drop-off location, and get a cost estimate before confirming the request. Drivers use their own vehicles.

"We have to be able to look at the Uber model, a model that according to their passengers provides responsive and affordable service," Petrowski said.

"I'm sure some taxi operators might scream, but the customer will decide what service they want. Customers aren't stupid. They won't get into unsafe vehicles."

There is no Uber service in Niagara, but Patni said Coventry-owned companies compete against Uber in markets across the country.

"The issue is, are they getting into a cab that has a qualified driver?" Patni said. "For us, it is about moving people safely.

"If the cab gets hit, does it have the right insurance? To insure a taxi cab costs roughly $10,000. If a person is picking up people in their own private car, they are paying $800 or $900.

"We know what it takes to provide coverage. If you get hit in one of those cars and need rehabilitation, the question is who is going to pay for that? There are serious questions to be asked."

Uber's model allows the driver and the customer to see the other's profile and confirm or reject the ride. The user pays ahead of time.

Another subject under examination is the possibility of region-wide taxi licences.

Licences are currently issued for individual municipalities.

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LOCALNEWS

HEALTH CARE: Niagara EMS receiving more calls

'We're seeing a sicker population'

RAY SPITERI
Postmedia Network

An aging, sicker Niagara population is contributing to "large increases" in calls regional paramedics are responding to.

There was an 8.4% increase in 2013 calls and a 5.4% increase in 2014, said Kevin Smith, chief of Niagara Emergency Medical Services.

"Certainly, we have an aging population here in Niagara, so we attribute that to some of the call increase," Smith said during an online discussion with reporters from Postmedia Network last Friday.

"We're seeing a sicker population in a sense that the acuity levels of the patients that we respond to are sicker.

"Then we think about the health-care system changes that are taking place and it becomes a very complex system to navigate. "Sometimes what we hear and see are people who (feel) it's easier to call 911 and we'll navigate them through the system on their behalf."

Smith said Niagara is fortunate to have its own communications and dispatch centre, which handles calls.

"We see probably about 88,000, 90,000 calls coming through that centre each and every year, so it's very busy," he said.

"Of that, we're looking at about 48,000 to 50,000 incidents that we will respond to.

"Out of that, we transport just about 40,000, 42,000 patients throughout the region."

Smith said Niagara EMS's goal is to "match the emergency resources with the people who need it the most.

"Everybody has an emergency and we want to get to them in a timely manner, but the reality is that some people need that service within five and six minutes, and others it can take 10 or 15 minutes and it doesn't change their outcome."

He said when 911 calls come through the dispatch centre, a triage system is used to determine the severity of the emergency.

"We go through and evaluate what the caller says — what they're seeing or reporting as far as a patient, if it's not a patient on the scene.

"We use a very specific triage system and guidelines of questions to be able to go through and get to a very specific determinant on what might be wrong with that patient.

"Based on that outcome ... we have a response plan ... that is based on medical evidence."

Smith said the role of paramedics has changed significantly during the years.

In the 1960s and '70s, for instance, Smith said it was more of a "load and go" job.

"There was no concern at all for any personal protection — no gloves, none of the biohazard things we think of today.

"Then it was drive as quick as you could to get to the hospital."

The role of paramedics — and the responsibilities — have evolved greatly since those days, said Smith.

"When you think about the equipment that is necessary today for the response, it all starts with having the best information that we can about what's happening at a scene.

"That's through the 911 caller, the information that we get at the dispatch and then that's how the paramedics are ready to deploy themselves, make sure they have the proper ... personal protective equipment.

"Then the array of different medical procedures — medications that we can now treat people on the scene as necessary and get them to whatever level of care that they need after that."

Niagara Health System president Suzanne Johnston said Niagara EMS play a "vital role" when it comes to health-care delivery in the region, including potential life-saving interactions with patients, such as those who call 911 with signs and symptoms of stroke, prior to them being transported to health-care facilities.

"We rely heavily on our EMS partnership across the region," she said.

Johnston said the NHS and EMS have worked, and continue to work, together on their evolving partnership, such as the care patients receive in an ambulance en route to health-care facilities, as well as how quickly patients are transported from a scene to NHS sites.

During Smith's sit-down interview, he also discussed Niagara Falls regional Coun. Bob Gale's desire to look into amalgamation of emergency dispatch services in Niagara; the Ontario Paramedics Association's push for there to be special laws or penalties in place to help protect first responders from violence on the job; how closely paramedics work with firefighters and police officers; and national Paramedics Week, an annual celebration of the role paramedics play in the community.

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HISTORY

Lock 3 museum's the scene of a real 'whodunit'

BILL SAWCHUK
Postmedia Network

In the earliest days of St. Catharines, volunteer constables walked the beat armed only with their wits and a billy club.

Today's officers patrol the streets in high-tech squad cars, protected with Kevlar vests and carrying Tasers, pepper spray and sleek Glock pistols.

It is all laid out in the St. Catharines Museum's new Law and Order exhibit, which explores more than a century of policing in the city.

"Our new exhibit uncovers the men and women, the tools and the laws that have kept our community safe over the years," said museum curator Kathleen Powell.

"You'll be amazed how much has changed and how much old-school sleuthing still works today."

One of the most striking features of the exhibit is a bomb-disposal sled and body armour that were made locally for the police in the 1970s. It's heavy and awkward and doesn't look like it would offer much protection.

Powell said the Niagara Regional Police began training in emergency management as early as 1971 in response to the activities of the FLQ in Quebec and the October Crisis the year before.

"The gear is really heavy," she said. "The idea is you would put it on, and then you would hide behind the shield and approach a bomb." Powell said it takes about a year to create a special exhibit such as this one, which also highlights some stories of crime and the evolution of the local court system.

"Some of the handcuffs are pretty old from the 1850s," Powell said. "One of the oldest artifacts is a blackjack from the Fenian Raids in the period from 1866 to 1870. It was basically a beater-stick. We also have a lock from the Lincoln County Jail, which was built in 1866."

Law and Order in St. Catharines will be on display until April 2016. Visit www.stcatharinesmuseum.ca, phone 905-984-8880 or e-mail museum@stcatharines.ca for more information about the new exhibit or the St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canal Centre.

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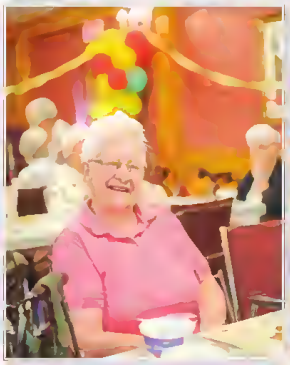

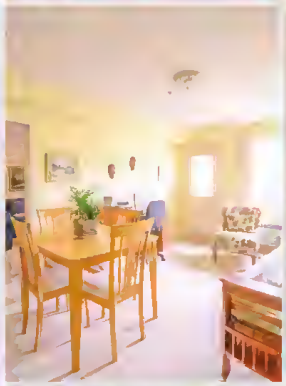

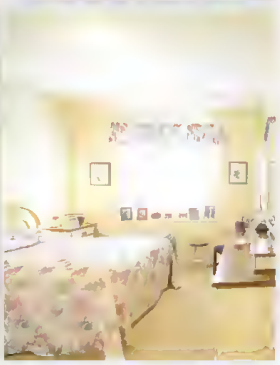

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LOCALNEWS

■ BIG BAND ERA

Swing band set for golden show that marks a milestone year

Postmedia Network

The Jimmy Marando Swing Band is celebrating its 50th year of bringing the big band era of music to Niagarans.

The 17-piece band, plus vocalists, was created by Marando in 1965 and led by him for 38 years.

The band continued following his death in 2003 as a collaborative body of local musicians. It continues to use Marando's music library in its performances today.

SUPPLIED PHOTO
Jimmy Marando

The Jimmy Marando Swing Band has made numerous appearances at local public events and venues in and around Welland, including in recent years at IlluminAqua, The Sunset Music Series and at the Fonthill bandshell, as well as at private functions.

The band has been presenting a free concert at Frado's Italian Restaurant, at the Homer Bridge on Queenston St. in St. Catharines, on the third Tuesday of every month for the past five years.

"Jimmy has left a great legacy in many ways — his family, his reputation, his commitment to his community, and more — not just as a musician and band leader," says the band's music director, Bruce Rolls.

"All of us in the band are proud, not only to be part of the great institution he started, but to keep his name alive doing something he loved to do."

The 50th anniversary celebration performance is Tuesday, June 16, starting 7:30 p.m.

Back in the day, Marando's band rehearsed Eastdale Secondary School in Welland, The musician owned Marando's Men's Wear.

■ NIAGARA FALLS COMIC CON

Elvira is still horror's mistress

JOHN LAW
Postmedia Network

For Cassandra Peterson, Elvira isn't just her alter-ego, she's also a demanding boss.

Being the iconic Mistress of the Dark at 30 is one thing. But at 63, that classic, cleavage-revealing outfit isn't exactly casual wear. It forces Peterson to keep up appearances and resemble the sexy vamp who debuted on Los Angeles late night TV in 1981.

While she'll never get tired of the character, Peterson says the grind of becoming Elvira isn't getting easier.

"I do get tired of putting the drag on," she says on the line from Los Angeles. "It's not the most comfortable thing in the world. And the working out, and eating really well, because I have to stay in the same outfit I've been in for 35 years. So it takes a little co-ordination and concentration about keeping myself fit.

"But I don't tire of doing the character. I have a blast, really. Once I'm in it, then I have a good time."

Appearing at the Niagara Falls Comic Con, June 5 to 7, Peterson — through corny jokes and endless curves — is a horror institution. Between the TV appearances, calendars, posters, ad campaigns and endless other products, she worries "we're running out of ideas" to put the Elvira stamp on.

"I just signed up for a skateboard," she chuckles. "Haven't had one of those yet, so that'll be a new one for me."

For Peterson, it was a long, weird trip finding her macabre character. She spent more than a decade trying to crack showbiz after graduating high school in 1969, spending time as a Las Vegas showgirl, singing in Italian rock bands and appearing briefly in movies including *Diamonds Are Forever* and *The Working Girls*.

In 1981, she auditioned for the revival of L.A.'s weekend horror show *Fright Night*. After producers said no to her original pitch — a Sharon Tate lookalike — she went full vampire with a tight-fitting, low-cut black gown and beehive wig. But instead of talking like a typical horror movie character, Peterson tapped into the California Valley Girl talk starting to take hold.

Her campy humour and pin-up sex appeal was an immediate hit, and after horror magazine *Fangoria* profiled her in 1982, her popularity soared. By 1988, she co-wrote and starred in her own movie, the gloriously goofy *Elvira, Mistress of the Dark*.

Despite the character's cartoon demeanour, Elvira would become both a feminist and gay icon through the years. Peterson credits the character's uncompromising spunk and confidence, knowing she's an outsider and not giving a crap.

"She doesn't take any guff from guys, and stands up for her beliefs, whatever they are — even though they're usually wrong," she says.

"And she doesn't let any guys come in and rescue her. I made that a really big point in my first film and my other film, *Haunted Hills*. Nobody ever steps in and saves her, she's never a damsel in distress. She can pretty much kick everybody's butt on her own."

During the 1990s, Elvira made the switch from horror hostess to lucrative brand, appearing in beer ads, comic books and pinball games. Busy as she was, Peterson worried the horror host part of her career might be over.

"With the end of syndicated TV, the advent of cable, and then the advent of the computer ... I really thought the horror host was dead," she says. "I thought it was over for a multitude of reasons.

"But I'm happy to say that when I go out to these shows, like the one in Niagara Falls, I run into people who are doing horror hosting on cable stations or on the Internet. It's a smaller piece of the pie but they're able to do it. I'm happy to say it's kind of back."

It's not just the media landscape that has changed, however. Horror movies — the kind Peterson loves hosting — are fleeting. So for her return to horror hosting last year on Hulu, she went back to old-time romps like *Dollman*, *Shrunken Heads* and *Cannibal Women in the Avocado Jungle of Death*.

"I really do like the old stuff," she says. "There are some more modern (horror) movies I do really like, but in general, I love the old stuff and the camp feeling you get. Honestly, those movies from the '50s and '60s are like comfort food to me.

"When I was home sick, cuddled up on the sofa with a blanket, I would watch old horror movies. It brings me back to my childhood and gives me a real feeling of 'Everything's OK.'"

Which is the same feeling the Mistress of the Dark herself instils in fans (as seen by the multitude of Elvira tattoos she's shown at every convention).

"It's strange ... the character doesn't age," she says. "I kind of do, but the character doesn't. I don't know how that works. I guess there's a lot of hair and makeup there."

LOCALNEWS

■ MUSIC

Entry fee eliminated for Niagara Music Awards

JOHN LAW
Postmedia Network

The Niagara Music Awards are headed back to downtown Niagara Falls.

For its eighth year, the show will return to Taps Brewhouse on Queen St. for an outdoor celebration on Sept. 15. Last year's memorable show was a hit with both artists and fans, says NMA co-director Erin Visentin, so it was a clear choice to go back.

"I think it went better than planned," she said. "I had no complaints after the show. Everybody was like, 'It was so great.'"

It appears to finally be a stable home for the awards, which bounced from theatres to arenas during its first six years. It started at the 1,000-seat Centre for the Performing Arts inside Kingston College on Epworth Circle, then headed to Welland and Thorold before returning to Niagara Falls two years ago at the Seneca Queen Theatre.

Taps co-owner Eric Martin said last year's show fit perfectly with the restaurant's ongoing support of local music.

"That's one of the big things (for us), we wanted to build a scene in Niagara Falls, which has always been lacking," he said. "It's been a lot better in the last year or so."

Submissions for this year's awards can be sent starting June 8, with one big difference: No entry fee. Organizers found many artists would only enter one category because of the fees involved.

It should bring back categories like Punk Group of the Year which were cancelled last year because of lack of entries.

"I'm hoping with free submissions more bands will hear about it," said Visentin.

Under the old format, it cost $10 to enter each category.

Also different this year will be a bigger video and production presence.

"Finding the right production people to work with is key on that," said Martin.

Artists can enter at www.niagaramusicawards.ca until the end of July. Nominees will be announced Aug. 18.

Last year's awards received an extra jolt when hometown hero Deadmau5, Joel Zimmerman, showed up to receive a lifetime achievement award. He stayed for most of the night and even handed out five awards.

"When you have a big name, internationally known person who shows up to our little Niagara Music Awards, that means people are paying attention," said Martin.

Visentin hopes St. Catharines-born Ron Sexsmith will show up to collect his lifetime achievement award, announced last year.

"We're going to honour him again this year," she said. "We still have his award. He said (last year) 'If I had known, I would have shown up sooner.'"

john.law@sunmedia.ca

JOHN LAW / POSTMEDIA NETWORK FILE PHOTO

Deadmau5 (Joel Zimmerman) at last year's Niagara Music Awards.

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COMMENCEMENT OF CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES NOTICE
For the Niagara Region Wind Project, FWRN LP

Project Name Niagara Region Wind Project (the "Project")

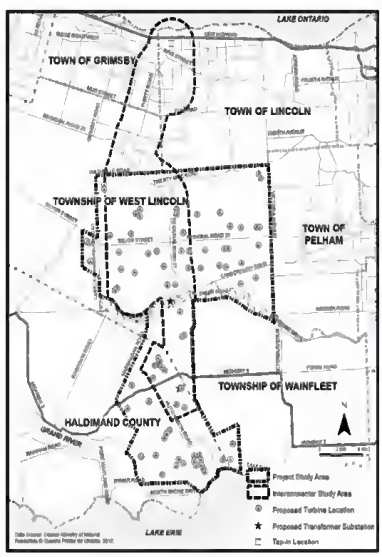
Project Location Within the Townships of West Lincoln and Wainfleet and the Town of Lincoln in the Niagara Region and Haldimand County in Southern Ontario

Notice Dated At Haldimand County and Niagara Region, the 4th of June 2015.

Niagara Region Wind Corporation, now FWRN LP (the "Proponent"), is planning to engage in a renewable energy project for which a Renewable Energy Approval ("REA") was issued by the Ministry of the Environment (now the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change on November 21, 2014.)

Project Description
The Project is located within the Townships of West Lincoln and Wainfleet and the Town of Lincoln in the Niagara Region and Haldimand County in Southern Ontario. The Project will consist of 77 wind turbine generators, step-up transformer, electrical collector lines, a transmission line, two transformer substations, turbine access roads and construction staging areas. The Project will have a total maximum nameplate capacity of up to 230 MW.

Commencement of Construction Activities
Initial surveying, land clearing and grading activities will begin for the access roads and the operations and maintenance building. These activities are described in detail in the REA technical reports found on the Project website: www.nrwc.ca. By June 6th, 2015, the Project is expected to be under full construction, including construction of access roads, turbine foundations, collector lines, and the substations. The delivery of the turbine components to the site is expected to begin in August 2015. Construction activities are expected to last approximately 16 months.



Project Contact Information
If you have any questions or concerns throughout the Project's construction phase, please do not hesitate to contact us at:

PROJECT CONTACT	BOREA CONSTRUCTION CONTACT
Shiloh Berriman	Mahmud Hindi
Email: shiloh.berriman@enercon.de	Email: mahmud.hindi@boreaconstruction.com
Cell: 289-683-2563	Cell: 647-463-9116

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PLEASE RECYCLE THIS NEWSPAPER

Prof seeks sleep study participants

Brock University psychology professor and sleep expert Kimberly Cote is conducting two research projects that will shed more light on how the brain functions when we have less — and more — sleep than usual.

And she is looking for people to participate in those projects.

The first study examines how people control their emotions when they are sleep deprived for one night. Participants would sleep from 3 a.m. to 7 a.m. (or some would sleep a full night for comparison) and perform a range of emotion-related tasks in the lab later that day. Researchers would measure participants' brain waves with an electroencephalogram (EEG) as they perform their tasks.

The second project is a "napping" study, for which participants spend a couple of afternoons in Brock's sleep lab. They begin by performing tasks that involve memory, emotions and learning.

Then, depending on how they're grouped, participants either take a short nap, a long nap or no nap at all. After, they resume their activities and are measured, in part, on their ability to recall key aspects of the earlier activities.

People 17 to 30 years old wanting to participate in the research must meet a number of conditions. For more information, or to register for pre-screening, visit the sleep lab's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/BrockSleepLab, or phone the lab at 905-688-5550 ext. 3795.

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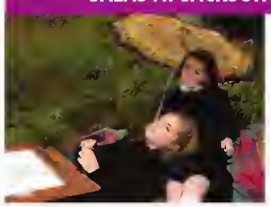
THURSDAY JUNE 18 — CANADIAN PREMIERE
7:00PM DINNER | 9:30PM SCREENING | AFTER PARTY TO FOLLOW
TESTAMENT OF YOUTH
Cast: Emily Watson, Hayley Atwell, Taran Egerton, Kit Harington, Alicia Vikander, Dominic West
A powerful story of love, war and remembrance, based on the First World War memoir by Vera Brittain, which has become the classic testimony of that war from a woman's point of view. DIRECTOR JAMES KENT ATTENDING

GALAS AT JACKSON-TRIGGS — CANADIAN PREMIERES



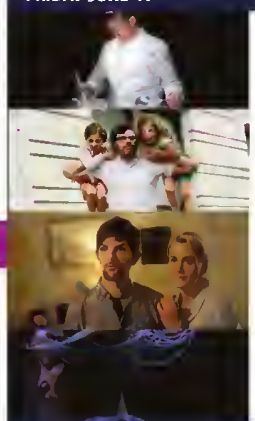
FRIDAY JUNE 19 **THE FALLING**
7:00PM DINNER | 9:30PM SCREENING | AFTER PARTY TO FOLLOW
Cast: Florence Pugh, Maisie Williams, Greta Scacchi, Maxine Peake, Monica Dolan
It's 1969 at a strict English girls' school where charismatic Abbie and intense and troubled Lydia are best friends. After a tragedy occurs at the school, a mysterious fainting epidemic breaks out threatening the stability of all involved.

SATURDAY JUNE 20 **MATCH**
7:00PM DINNER | 9:30PM SCREENING | AFTER PARTY TO FOLLOW
Cast: Patrick Stewart, Carla Gugino, Matthew Lillard
Patrick Stewart gives a captivating performance in this witty, emotionally gripping adaptation of director Stephen Belber's own Tony Award-nominated play.

SUNDAY JUNE 21 **UNEXPECTED**
7:00PM DINNER | 9:30PM SCREENING | AFTER PARTY TO FOLLOW
Cast: Cobie Smulders, Gail Bean, Elizabeth McGovern
When Samantha Abbott begins her final semester teaching science at a Chicago high school, she faces some unexpected news: She's pregnant. Soon after, Samantha learns that one of her favorite students, Jasmine, has landed in a similar situation.

FILMALICIOUS

FRIDAY JUNE 19



PELLER ESTATES WINERY
7:00PM DINNER | 9:30PM SCREENING
FOR GRACE CAST: CURTIS DUFFY — CHEF CURTIS DUFFY ATTENDING

SOUTHBROOK VINEYARDS
7:00PM DINNER | 9:30PM SCREENING
PEOPLE, PLACES, THINGS — CANADIAN PREMIERE
CAST: JEMAINE CLEMENT, REGINA HALL, STEPHANIE ALLYNNE

HENRY OF PELHAM FAMILY ESTATE
7:00PM DINNER | 9:30PM SCREENING
THE OVERNIGHT — CANADIAN PREMIERE
CAST: ADAM SCOTT, TAYLOR SCHILLING, JASON SCHWARTZMAN, JUDITH GODRÈCHE

REDSTONE WINERY
7:00PM DINNER | 9:30PM SCREENING
ADVANTAGEOUS — JACQUELINE KIM ATTENDING
CAST: JACQUELINE KIM, FREYA ADAMS, JAMES URBANIAK, JENNIFER EHLE, JENNIFER IKEDA, KEN JEONG, SAMANTHA KIMMAXINE PEAKE, MONICA DOLAN

SATURDAY JUNE 20

PELLER ESTATES WINERY
7:00PM DINNER | 9:30PM SCREENING
LITTLE BIG MASTER — NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE
CAST: MIRIAM CHIN WAH YEUNG, LOUIS KOO, RICHARD NG

SOUTHBROOK VINEYARDS
7:00PM DINNER | 9:30PM SCREENING
POSTHUMOUS — CANADIAN PREMIERE
CAST: JACK HUSTON, BRIT MARLING, LAMBERT WILSON, TOM SCHILLING, ALEXANDER FEHLING

HENRY OF PELHAM FAMILY ESTATE
SPECIAL SCREENING
HOW TO CHANGE THE WORLD
CAST: BILL DARNELL, DAVID GARRICK, BOB HUNTER, BOBBI HUNTER, EMILY HUNTER, PAUL WATSON, BARRY PEPPER

REDSTONE WINERY
7:00PM DINNER | 9:30PM SCREENING
I'LL SEE YOU IN MY DREAMS
CAST: BLYTHE DANNER, SAM ELLIOTT, MARTIN STARR, MALIN AKERMAN, RHEA PERLMAN, MARY KAY PLACE

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THE LOST AVIATOR • TESTAMENT OF YOUTH • LIZA THE FOX FAIRY

LANDMARK CINEMA (PEN CENTRE)
SATURDAY JUNE 20
NIAGARA RISES SHORTS • THE LOST AVIATOR
THE HOTEL DIEU • FOR GRACE • VIAJE
SERGIO HERMAN F**KING PERFECT • THE FALLING • DIARY OF A TEENAGE GIRL
SUNDAY JUNE 21
POSTHUMOUS • LITTLE BIG MASTER • LOST PENNY
THE DIARY OF A TEENAGE GIRL • FANCIFUL • I'LL SEE YOU IN MY DREAMS • BEST OF ENEMIES • MATCH

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THE AMAZING WIPLALA • THE OVERNIGHT
UNEXPECTED • THE QUIET HOUR
SUNDAY JUNE 21
HOW TO CHANGE THE WORLD
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LOCALNEWS

■ THEATRE

Man revisits his prison life for one-man show

JOHN LAW
Postmedia Network

It was both the best and worst thing to happen to Michael Henley.

It nearly cost him his life. But also gave his life new purpose.

Most ex-cons want to forget their time in prison. They certainly don't want to relive it. But since serving two years in the late 1990s for — among other things — robbing a grocery store, the Niagara Falls fitness trainer has written an online journal and made a short film about his experience.

Last month, he debuted a 90-minute, one-man show, *23:30*, at his Main St. fitness centre Motivators. The title alludes to the time spent per day in solitary, punishment for refusing to co-operate with prison officials after he was stabbed. Henley chose to be silent rather than a rat.

Locked in a hole gave him plenty of time to ponder life, he says. Which is why his post-prison years have been so busy talking about it.

"It's been very good," he says, describing early reaction to the show. "I had one comment about it that said, 'It doesn't even look like you're acting, it looks like you're reliving it.' Which is pretty much exactly what I was doing."

In 1997, Henley was sent to the Collins Bay Institution in Kingston, Ont. — the end result of a misspent youth. After his stabbing, stemming from an argument over loud music with another inmate, he was sent to the much harsher Millhaven Institution in Bath, Ont., as part of his punishment.

MIKE DIBATTISTA/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

23:30, a one-man show by fitness trainer Michael Henley of Niagara Falls depicts his life behind bars and his life afterwards.

He was released in 2009, determined to use the experience to his benefit. He started telling his story in chapters on his Facebook page, then made a short film which he posted on YouTube.

For *23:30*, Henley turns his fitness studio into a mini-theatre, seating 30 people. His stage is three sheets meant to depict prison walls, a makeshift sink and toilet, and a mattress on the floor.

For 90 minutes, Henley re-enacts his life before, during and after jail.

"It's like a motivational seminar, in a sense," he says. "By the end of it I come full circle with people. It's not just about me being in a prison cell, it's about the prison cell people put themselves in and the things they take for granted.

"The things they forget every day when they walk outside. Their own freedoms and stuff."

john.law@sunmedia.ca

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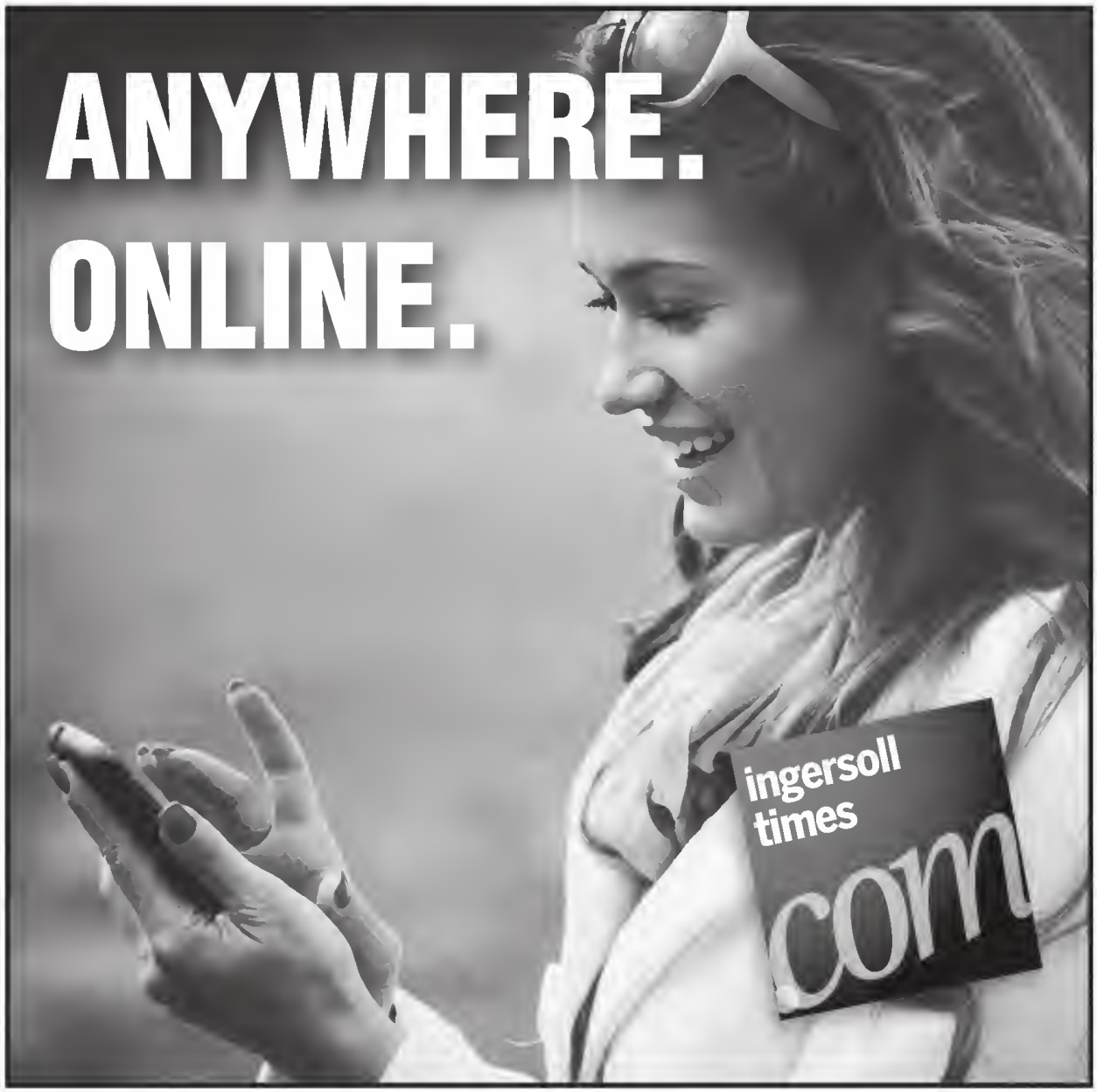

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